

Report

Keweenaw National Historical Park

■ 1.0 Site Description

Keweenaw National Historical Park was founded to commemorate the history of copper mining life on the Keweenaw Peninsula. Located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the Keweenaw Peninsula area is the only place in the world commercially abundant quantities of pure copper occurred. The area is the oldest hard-rock mining operation in America and has a history of metal mining dating back 7,000 years. Mines in the area reached a depth of over 9,000 feet.

The Park was formed in 1992 with a unique collective partnership between private land-owners and the Park. Most of the Park's 1,700 acres within two units are still under private ownership and will remain that way. The Park will only purchase key structures to preserve their history. The Park works with private owners for interpretation and preservation. Currently there are 16 cooperating sites inside and outside of the Park boundary in this program. The program has matching federal funds for the cooperating sites.

The two units of the Park are in the towns of Quincy and Calumet, located 12 miles apart. Quincy's interpretation is geared toward waterfront activities related to the copper mining industry. Calumet's interpretation tells the tale of the story of the copper mining industry, showing the paternalistic aspect of the copper mining companies.

The average user visiting Keweenaw National Historical Park stays in the area for several days. The Keweenaw Peninsula receives over 200 inches of snowfall a year because of the influence of Lake Superior. Consequently, snowmobiling and skiing are popular activities in the winter months. Visitation at the Park is also high during the fall months when the leaves are changing colors. Visitation levels are at approximately 100,000 users annually with peak months being June to November.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

At current there are no alternative transportation services in the Park, although there are long-range plans to link the Calumet and Quincy sections of the Park via alternative transportation. Long-range goals include a historic trolley system in the Calumet downtown area and a trolley system linking Calumet and Quincy.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Because of the historic nature of Calumet and the Keweenaw National Historic Park, the downtown area of Calumet is prized as a historic example of copper mining life. Since the downtown was formed around the turn of the century, the streets are narrow brick roadways with little parking. With the rising tourism trade, the downtown area becomes congested. Satellite parking lots with trams or trolleys to the downtown may resolve some of the congestion without destroying the historic framework of downtown. A trolley system serving the downtown area and linking the towns of Calumet and Quincy might also be historically accurate while at the same time resolving some parking problems.

Accessibility is also an issue in Keweenaw National Historical Park. Most of the privately owned interpretation sites are not handicapped accessible.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

Keweenaw National Historical Park is a Park that is in its infancy. Formed in just 1992, the Park is in a stage of growth not only physically via the acquisition of new properties, but in visitation as well. Visitation levels alone probably do not warrant alternative transportation at the present time. However, when considering the interest in preserving the historic nature of the Park and the privately owned segments of downtown Calumet, alternative transportation makes sense at the present visitation levels. Trams and trolleys could provide some congestion relief and resolve some accessibility issues while at the same time keep the character of a downtown area that was built before the popularity of the automobile. In addition, alternative transportation may serve to link two fragmented sections of the Park with a historic interpretive experience.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

Keweenaw National Historical Park. Internet Site: <http://www.nps.gov/kewe/>. Information printed November 16, 1999.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

William O. Fink, Superintendent, telephone interview, November 22, 1999